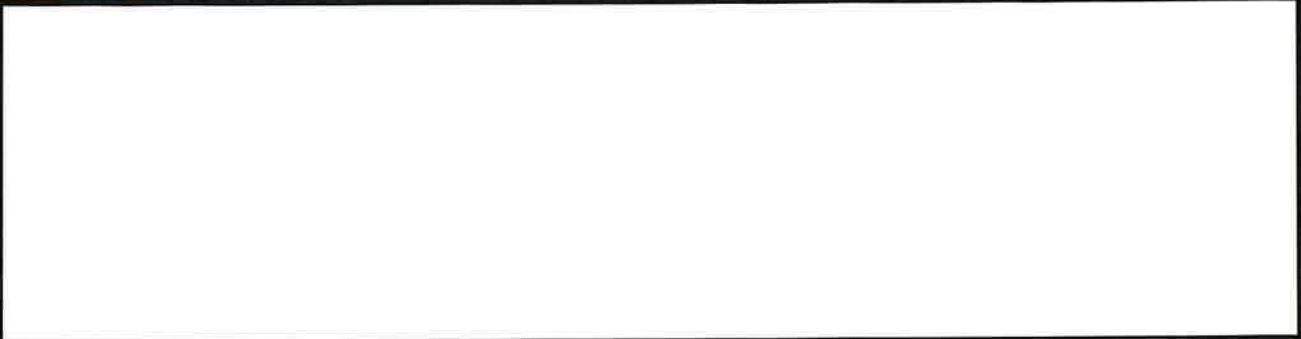


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NEWS

## Hinds County Judge explains why suspects have an 'easier' path in the county

by: wjtvmarypullen

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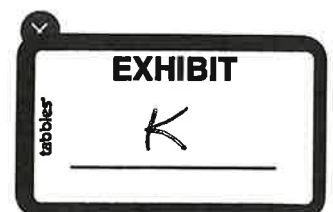
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HINDS COUNTY, Miss. (WJTV) – A murder suspect only had to come up with \$10,000 to get out of jail in Hinds County.

A burglary suspect had to come up with 10 times that amount

What is the difference?



That burglary suspect was arrested in Rankin County.

WJTV's Malary Pullen sat down, one on one, with Hinds County Senior Judge Tomie Green to discuss why it seems that when criminals are caught ... Hinds County courts provide an easier path out of jail.

Ninety-eight percent of the criminals arrested in Jackson have been behind bars before.

That's according to Jackson Police Chief Lee Vance.

Many are released on what some consider a low bond amount, but why?

WJTV's Malary Pullen went to the Senior Hinds County Circuit Court Judge who issues some of those bonds to get answers.

"Bond was never meant to keep people in jail. It was meant to assure that if they were indicted they would appear for trial. That's not how the public sees it, though," said Judge Green.

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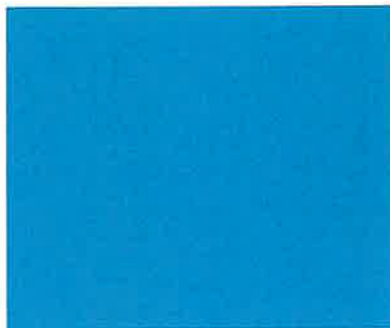


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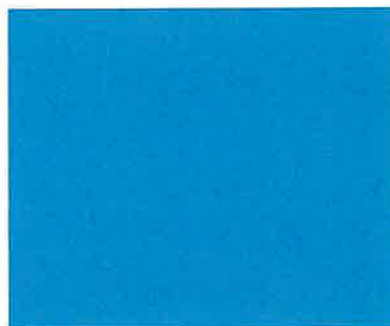


She's accused of killing a man inside a store after an argument. She was given a \$150,000 bond which means she only had to come up with \$15,000 and put on house arrest by Judge Tomie Green.

WJTV's Malary Pullen: "Why not though send the message of we are going to hold these people accountable for what they are accused of committing."

"It's not our job to send messages to the community. It's our job to make sure that the constitution is followed," said Judge Green.

For years there's been criticism from law enforcement when it comes to the Hinds County Justice System:



"The criminal justice system is designed to keep the public safe from criminals. We in law enforcement, have absolutely no power over these judges. Their thought process in releasing these individuals, really, I don't have a clue sometimes," said Chief Lee Vance of the Jackson Police Department.

Jackson Police Chief Lee Vance is talking about Loren Shell Blackwell. Back in October, she was released on a \$1,000 and sentenced to house arrest.

She was pregnant at the time and a capital murder suspect in the death of Lee Kendrick from Pearl.

Blackwell went back to jail after giving birth.

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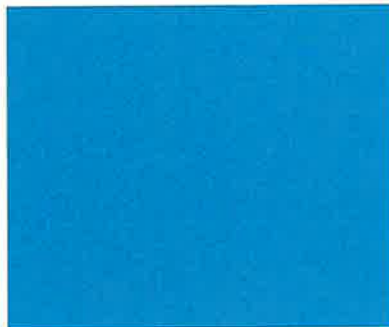


"As judges we have to hold the DA and the police officers accountable to make sure that we don't hold the person in jail an unreasonable amount of time and they get a fair, just and speedy trial," said Judge Green.

WJTV's Malary Pullen: "Is there some type of responsibility felt though from the judge, say if you do give a murder suspect a bond, they bond out and that person commits another crime?"

"Absolutely, absolutely. I think every judge's greatest fear is that they will set a bond that they believe under the law is reasonable and that the individual will make the bond and get back out and start doing some other things that's dangerous to the public. So, therefore, we usually have bond hearings to determine the public safety risk of that individual," said Judge Green. "There are certain factors to be considered in setting the bond. Not the fact that the person has committed the crime alone but whether that person is within the community, has a job, doesn't have a job, has no priors, has some priors charges pending, whether they were convicted on prior charges."

Throughout her career and hundreds of cases before her, Judge Green says she's narrowed it down to some of the biggest problems when it comes to crime in the county.



"Crime is directly related to education or the lack thereof. I can't tell you the number of times I have defendants who stand in my courtroom and we have a litany of questions that we have to ask them and one of them is, 'How far did you go in school?'. I guarantee you, it's usually about 8th or 9th grade for about 80 percent of the defendants that come in whether they're males or females," said Judge Green.

WJTV's Malary Pullen: "Is there a bit of sympathy that comes with this?"

"The judges can't have sympathy. They only can apply the law. We don't decide fact, juries do. We only apply the law in sentencing should the jury find the defendant guilty. If the jury finds that the individual is not guilty, then they leave the courtroom, even if the police have arrested

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**PRESS RELEASE**

# Jackson Murder Suspect Released on Bond Multiple Times by Local Judges Arrested Under Project EJECT on Federal Charges for Illegally Possessing Firearm While Under Indictment

Wednesday, July 8, 2020

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## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District  
of Mississippi

Jackson, Miss. – T'Quarius Jones, 21, of Jackson, Mississippi, has been charged with receipt of a firearm by a person under felony indictment, announced U.S. Attorney Mike Hurst and Special Agent in Charge Kurt Thielhorn with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

On or about April 30, 2018, Jones was arrested for allegedly killing another man in Jackson by shooting him over 20 times with an AR15-style rifle. Although initially detained, Jones was later released by Hinds County Circuit Judge Tomie Green on a \$20,000 bond.

On or about May 16, 2019, Jones was indicted by a Hinds County Grand Jury charging him with First Degree Murder. Jones was nonetheless allowed to remain free on a \$20,000 bond by Hinds County Circuit Judge Adrienne Wooten. Judge Wooten also denied the local District Attorney's request that the Defendant wear an ankle monitor.

On May 7, 2020, Jones was stopped by a Jackson Police Officer. Upon approaching the vehicle, the officer saw a black handgun in his vehicle. When asked about the weapon, Jones stated that



the gun was his. That firearm, a Smith & Wesson 9mm pistol, was purchased by Jones's father on March 14, 2020. Federal law prohibits individuals from receiving firearms while under indictment.

On May 27, 2020, the Hinds County District Attorney's Office moved to revoke Jones's bond. On or about June 19, 2020, Hinds County Circuit Judge Wooten denied the District Attorney's Motion to Revoke Bond and allowed Jones to continue to remain free on \$20,000 bond.

Jones is set to appear before Magistrate Judge F. Keith Ball at 2:30 p.m. today. Jones faces a maximum sentence of five years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine.

The public is reminded that a criminal complaint is merely a charge and should not be considered as evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

The case is being investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher Wansley.

This case is part of Project EJECT, an initiative by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Mississippi under the U.S. Department of Justice's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) and Project Guardian. EJECT is a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach to fighting and reducing violent crime through prosecution, prevention, re-entry and awareness. EJECT stands for "Empower Justice Expel Crime Together." PSN is bringing together all levels of law enforcement and the communities they serve to reduce violent crime and make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. Project Guardian draws upon the Department's past successful programs to reduce gun violence; enhances coordination of federal, state, local, and tribal authorities in investigating and prosecuting gun crimes; improves information-sharing by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives when a prohibited individual attempts to purchase a firearm and is denied by the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), to include taking appropriate actions when a prospective purchaser is denied by the NICS for mental health reasons; and ensures that federal resources are directed at the criminals posing the greatest threat to our communities.

*Updated July 8, 2020*

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## Topics

**PRESS RELEASE**

# Jackson Man Arrested Locally for Murder and Released on Bond Sentenced to Almost Six Years under Project EJECT for Illegally Possessing a Firearm

Tuesday, June 9, 2020

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## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District  
of Mississippi

Jackson, Miss. – Cedric Taylor, 45, of Jackson, was sentenced today by Senior U.S. District Judge David C. Bramlette III to 71 months in federal prison, followed by three years of supervised release, for illegally possessing a gun, announced U.S. Attorney Mike Hurst and Special Agent in Charge Michele Sutphin with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

On March 5, 2019, officers with the Jackson Police Department executed a search warrant on Taylor's residence in Jackson while investigating the murder of Dewan Fortner, a father of nine. Investigators recovered a firearm at the residence, which Taylor later confessed to knowingly possessing. While Taylor was arrested for murder in March 2019, he was thereafter released on a \$125,000 bond, even though, according to the victim's family, Taylor admitted in court that he had hid Fortner's body behind a building in Byram. This bond was granted despite the fact that Taylor had previous convictions for aggravated assault in Hinds County, Mississippi, and felon in possession of a firearm in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi.

"This murderer was released on bond by a local judge and would still be roaming the streets of Jackson and terrorizing law-abiding citizens if not for the work of our office and our law enforcement partners under Project EJECT. When murderers, rapists, and other violent offenders are released on bond by local judges, we are all placed in more danger, our

communities and families are made less safe, and criminals are not deterred from continuing their violent activities. If we are to improve the safety and security of our Capitol City and all of Mississippi, we must ensure that violent offenders are taken off our streets and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law,” said U.S. Attorney Hurst.

After being release on a local bond, Taylor was arrested on federal charges on March 29, 2019, of being a felon in possession of a firearm, and has been detained by U.S. Marshals without bond ever since. Taylor was indicted on August 6, 2019 and pled guilty before Judge Bramlette on February 25, 2020.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Lynn Murray.

This case is part of Project EJECT, an initiative by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Mississippi under the U.S. Department of Justice’s Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) and Project Guardian. EJECT is a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach to fighting and reducing violent crime through prosecution, prevention, re-entry and awareness. EJECT stands for “Empower Justice Expel Crime Together.” PSN is bringing together all levels of law enforcement and the communities they serve to reduce violent crime and make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. Project Guardian draws upon the Department’s past successful programs to reduce gun violence; enhances coordination of federal, state, local, and tribal authorities in investigating and prosecuting gun crimes; improves information-sharing by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives when a prohibited individual attempts to purchase a firearm and is denied by the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), to include taking appropriate actions when a prospective purchaser is denied by the NICS for mental health reasons; and ensures that federal resources are directed at the criminals posing the greatest threat to our communities.

*Updated June 9, 2020*

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**\$10K bond raised to \$200K in IHOP robbery**

Updated: 6:46 PM CST Feb 3, 2017

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**Erin Pickens**  

Morning Anchor

**JACKSON, Miss.** — A Jackson municipal court judge raised a \$10,000 bond Wednesday to \$200,000 Friday for a man accused a robbing a restaurant and carjacking someone hours earlier.

**Stephan Brown, 19, was arrested Tuesday** in connection with an armed robbery at the IHOP on Greenway Drive. The crime was caught on surveillance video, which showed a man pulling a gun on employees and them handing over cash. Employees said the robber left, but came back and demanded more money.

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Brown is also charged with a carjacking at Quality Inn, which is down the street from IHOP.

Jackson Police Chief Lee Vance was not happy about the decision of the low bond.

"I'm really upset about this. My officers work their asses off to catch these guys and get and hopefully keep them off the streets. They are running around committing heinous crimes, robberies, thefts, and carjackings against the citizens of Jackson and when we catch them and bring them before a judge and they get a low bond like this it is very disheartening. It bothers me a great deal. I don't like it and I am not going to hide my feelings. I am upset by it and appeal to the judges to consider their records and the safety of the community."

Vance said the punishment is a joke.

"It is my understanding that he was issued a \$10,000 total bond, \$5,000 for each count, which basically means he can he can post \$1000 and he can be back out in the streets again. That is unacceptable."

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**To honor of her dog who died at Christmastime, a 9-year-old girl holds holiday pet drive to help shelter dogs**

Officials with the Jackson Municipal Court said the officer gave erroneous information, Judge Shamsideen, brought defendant Brown back into his court and modified and raised the bond to \$100,000 on each count, \$200,000 bond and added the addendum that if he does somehow make bond that he must be placed under house arrest.

AD



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## TOP PICKS

